



ISSUE 151

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# ISLAMIC FOCUS

THE  
**Q**napoleonic  
CODE

Notes on  
**Libya**

ISLAM IN

*Constantia*



# Ahlan Wasahlan...

## FROM THE EDITOR

A new edition and more original content to stimulate your interest. In our article on Islam in Constantia we explore the history of the first Muslims on the shores of South Africa and their enduring legacy. Walk in the forests next to the stream where Sheikh Abdur Rahman Matebe Shah taught the first humble Maktab. We learn to appreciate the sacrifices the Ulama made in establishing a rich Hifz heritage in the country as well.

The article on trade and business shows us how to convert our business hours into a means of earning reward and Paradise. Pick up a few tips on how to see success in one's trade and marvel at the amazing system of Allah Ta'ala with regards to earning our livelihood. From stockfish to Run Island via white asparagus, we look at how the means of earning money is totally in the control of Allah Ta'ala.

Our regular Hadith Verification

series takes questions on the Noble Quran as the theme for this edition. This series is aimed at providing authentic references and verification of Hadith narrations.

The feature on the Napoleonic Code takes you on a fascinating journey into the impact Islamic law has had on European and international law. Join Napoleon on his Middle East adventures which saw him adapt Islamic legal texts to form the first formal French law. This is a period of history that is deliberately left out from the European school curricula.

End your journey with the Danish convert to Islam, Knud Holmboe's epic travels into Libya where he exposed the atrocities of the Italian occupation.

Email your thoughts to us: [info@islamicfocus.co.za](mailto:info@islamicfocus.co.za)

*Muhammad Badsha*  
(Moulana)

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# ISLAM IN *Constantia*

**The area of Constantia in Cape Town is now an affluent suburb of the city. It was originally the forest used to supply the Dutch settlement in the Cape in the 1600s. The Dutch were at that time expanding their trade empire in the region of todays Malaysia and Indonesia.**

---

**T**his was the basis of colonialism: exploiting people and resources of other countries to personal gain and enrichment. This continues today in the way the western financial system is designed. Economic control over former colonies together with offshore tax havens and other financial tools favour the former colonial rulers.

In 1667, the Dutch defeated the Muslims in Sumatra and one of the rulers Sheikh Abdur Rahman Matebe Shah along with two of his religious advisers was exiled to the Cape. One was bundled off to Robben Island while Sheikh Abdur Rahman and Sayyid

Mahmood were sent to the Constantia Forest. They were brought over on the ship the Polsbrook and are regarded as some of the first to bring Islam to South Africa's shores.



Sheikh Abdur Rahman was confined in the forest near a stream. He would take Wudhu from this stream and worship Allah ﷻ. He took the opportunity this presented to teach the slave population in the vicinity about Islam. This was possibly the first informal Madressa in South Africa. He passed away in 1681 or 1682 and is buried where he taught Islam. The stream still runs alongside his resting place. This was before the arrival of Sheikh Yusuf Macassari ﷺ in 1693 who set up the first Muslim community.

Interestingly in 1788 one of the ambassadors of the Tipu Sultan of Mysore, India visited Constantia while on his way to France to negotiate an alliance with Napoleon Bonaparte against the British. This

would make him one among one of the early Muslim presences in Constantia.

Constantia has two old Masjids. In the early 1900's the road from Wynberg through Constantia to Hout Bay was a rough sand one surrounded by farmland and bush. In 1902 Dawood Sadien bought Sillery Farm in Constantia and in 1913 donated a portion to be used as a Masjid. This became Masjid Mahmood. Bricks for the construction were delivered by horse-drawn wagons.

The other one is Masjid Monier which predates Masjid Mahmood and was established in 1883. During Apartheid, Constantia was zoned in 1961 as a White's area. In the late 1960's the non-Whites were forcibly removed to Mitchells Plain and other areas. The Muslims managed to keep both the Masjids going by coming regularly for special programs.

Today these Masjids once again serve as fully functional hubs for Muslims who have moved back into the area.

Masjid Monier has an old Muslim graveyard attached to it with some noteworthy graves. Among the more recent ones is that of Sheikh Saalih Abadi, the father of Hifz in South Africa. He passed away in 1999. His father had come to Cape Town from Yemen. Sheikh Saalih became a Hafiz at the age of 15. He then left for Makkah Mukarramah in 1927 and stayed there for 12 years gaining Islamic knowledge. He was bestowed with an Ijaza (permission) in the Riwayat of Hafs form of reading the Noble Quran by one of the Imams of the Haram. Back in South Africa he dedicated his life to the Noble Quran and served as Imam in Durban's Grey Street Masjid for a while before settling in Cape Town. It is estimated that through his students over 1,000 people in South Africa have to date memorised the Noble Quran.





## While on Robben Island he wrote several copies of the Noble Quran from memory as well as books on Fiqh and Aqeedah.

The European political struggles were having an impact on places across the world and the Cape was no different. The Anglo-Dutch War saw the Battle of Muizenberg take place in the Cape. This saw the British take control of the Cape in 1795. This became an opportune moment for a personality like Imam Abdullah ibn Qadhi Abdus Salaam popularly known as Tuan Guru. He had been imprisoned for 12 years on Robben Island by the Dutch as a political prisoner from Tidore. He was a prince of Tidore in the Ternate Islands of Indonesia and was regarded as a threat to the Dutch in the Muslim struggle for independence.

While on Robben Island he wrote several copies of the Noble Quran from memory as well as books on Fiqh and Aqeedah. These became the primary reference works for the Muslims in the Cape in the 19th century. On his release he was 81 years old and agitated for Muslims to be allowed to worship openly. He set up a Madressa in what is now the Bo Kaap area of Cape Town

in 1793. He tried for a Masjid but was not given permission by the Dutch. Undaunted, he led the Muslims in public Juma prayers in a disused quarry. When the British took control of the Cape in 1795 at the Battle of Muizenberg, Tuan Guru got permission from them to establish a Masjid. The building was made Waqf by a Muslim lady, Sartjie van de Kaap and became the first Masjid in South Africa known as the Auwal Masjid.

This was followed by Palm Street Masjid and Nurul Islam Masjid in Cape Town. The fourth Masjid in the country and the first to be built from ground up and the first with a Minaret was Masjid Qudama in Uitenhage. In the Jubilee Park cemetery in Uitenhage lies Imam Jabaruddin, known as Jan Bardien who owned several properties. He established Masjid Qudama in Caledon Street, Uitenhage on one of these properties. The Muslims of Port Elizabeth would leave by ox cart on Thursday nights to participate in the Juma in Uitenhage as the city had no Masjid as yet.

### The lessons we take away are that

1. Our forefathers made Islam a priority in their own lives no matter what their circumstances and imparted this to others especially by establishing Masjids and Madressas. We should not rest on their achievements but need to look at how we can support our Masjids and Madressas to leave our legacy behind.
2. Learn history to gain an astounding glimpse into how the Taqdeer and system of Allah ﷻ works. Events halfway across the globe can impact on our lives in both positive and negative ways. Trust the decisions of Allah ﷻ and aim to please Him so that things fall in our favour.





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# THE TEST OF TRADE

We spend a great portion of our lives preparing and training for a career or a job, and then in doing it. If we can align our 9-5 hours with what is pleasing to Allah ﷻ, we can convert a major part of our life to an avenue of earning reward.

The Hadith informs us, "Seeking Halaal sustenance is an obligation on every Muslim." (Tabrani) The system of this world is designed such that we need to go out and earn to survive, see to our families, and carry out acts of worship that require money.

"90 percent of sustenance lies in carrying out business and trade." This Hadith tells us that from all the ways of earning and making money, a large percentage is found in trading and doing business.

The scholars have an interesting academic discussion on which form of earning money is better. Some said that having a job is the better form, while others opine that it is trading. Ibn Hajr رحمه الله said that trade and business is better because it involves potentially more trust in Allah ﷻ as compared to having a job with a salary or wage. You invest money in a shop, and open the doors in the morning to trade, not knowing if any customers will walk through the door; this requires a great deal of trust as opposed to having a job and knowing that your wage will be paid to you on a specific date.

In any case, earning a living is praiseworthy in Islam. "The best earnings are those of the traders," a Hadith tells us. Obviously, this comes with certain conditions such as,

- 1 Don't lie.
- 2 Don't deceive when entrusted with something
- 3 Don't default on promises
- 4 Don't rundown or demean goods you intend buying to get them at a lower price
- 5 Don't overpraise your goods when selling to get a better price
- 6 Don't evade at the time when you need to pay for an item
- 7 Don't harass the debtor when something is due to you, and he is finding difficulty in paying





# MAKING AN EFFORT

Allah ﷻ speaks about those who “will be travelling through the land seeking Allah’s bounty” in business and trade (Noble Quran 73:20). Imam Suyuti ﷺ said that this verse is the basis of trade and commerce. There needs to be an effort made to earn a living.

Someone questioned Ibn Mubarak ﷺ saying, “You command us to stay away from worldly things and to have less of the material things, yet we see you importing goods from Khurasan to sell in Makkah Mukarramah. How is this possible?” He replied, “I do so to survive, to keep my dignity and to help me in the obedience of Allah ﷻ.”

Imam Ahmed bin Hambal ﷺ was asked his opinion regarding a man who sits at home or in a Masjid and says, “I will not do any work and will wait until my sustenance comes to me.” He replied, “That

man has no knowledge and is ignorant.”

We read the Hadith which tells us that if we have trust in Allah ﷻ like the birds who go out in the morning with empty stomachs and come back full. We tend to overlook the part that says that they make an effort by going out of their nests. The Sahaba ﷺ travelled on the land and by sea doing business.

Umar ﷺ said, **“None of you should sit down and not make an effort to seek his provisions and pray, ‘Oh Allah, grant me sustenance,’ while you know full well that the sky does not rain down gold and silver.”** (Ihya)

Abu Qulaba ﷺ said to a man, “It is more pleasing to me to see you earning a living than sitting constantly in a corner of the Masjid.”

Economic power is an important and crucial part of a country's independence. Umar ﷺ advised Muslims to trade proficiently so that non-Muslim powers do not become an impediment in their worldly independence. Economic prosperity and financial independence is critical to any nation's true freedom.

The Hadith highlights the potentially high status of a businessman,

**“Allah ﷻ loves the believer who is engaged in trade.”** [Tabrani]


By engaging in business in a way that is pleasing to Allah ﷻ makes our professions noble.

Ibn Abbas ﷺ instructed,

**“I advise you to treat the traders well for they are the messengers between the different regions of the world and the trustees of Allah ﷻ on earth.”**

[Daylami]





# ALTRUISM

One of the salient features of a successful Muslim businessman is his altruism, his concern for those who are less well off in his society. There are certain businessmen who are selected by Allah ﷻ to get vast amounts of money. They continue to receive this with the condition that they do not become irritated at the continuous crowds of people coming to them for assistance. By tolerating this annoyance, they secure the continued

enjoyment of the wealth they were blessed with. (Qadhaa al Hawaaij)

Muhallab ﷺ told his son, "For your clothes to be worn by someone else (by gifting it to him) is more wonderful than it being worn by you. And for your animal to be ridden by someone else is better than you riding it." Muslims recognise the fact that wealth is a blessing that needs to be shared with the less fortunate.

## THE AMAZING SYSTEM OF TRADE

Trade teaches us to trust in the system of Allah ﷻ which is truly marvellous. Nigeria is the world's leading importer of stockfish from Norway. It is integral to their cuisine. Millions of cod migrate to certain areas in Norway from January to April to breed. They are caught and the climate in Norway is ideal for the natural drying process the fish undergo. They are hung outside on 10-metre-high frames and left for three months in the cold, dry weather under the sun. No salt or any additives are added. Over 7,000 tons of these codfish are sold to Nigerians annually. How did this fish become popular in Nigeria? Over 50 years ago the Biafran civil war erupted in Nigeria and more than a million people died mainly from hunger. Nations of the world sent food aid and Norway sent this nutritious fish which needed no fridges to store and was full of vitamins. It was perfect for warding off kwashiorkor. It is sold in Nigeria for around

R1000/kg with a container of stockfish being worth R1,5 million. Imagine how the sustenance of the Norwegians is tied to that of Nigeria many hundreds of kilometres away.

A few weeks ago, at a workshop for Matrics, the presenter mentioned something that stood out. He said to the participants, "Over half of you will be in a career that currently does not exist!" This is very true of the world: new avenues of earning money constantly appear. Things like cell phones were but a figment of our imaginations three decades ago as we were growing up. Now thousands of people earn a living through the cell phone industry and related activities. Books in the 1980's envisaged a future in 2020 when phones would be found on watches and those reading would marvel that something like that would even be possible.

**Today AI specialists are sometimes earning R17 million annually in a career that did not exist a few short years ago.**

The ways of earning money can be mind boggling. White asparagus is called white gold. Edible ivory and a royal vegetable. It comes from the same plant that produces the green asparagus but is thicker and sweeter. The plant can't be exposed to the sun or the asparagus would turn green. As a result they are grown in deeper soil, covered with foil sheets and individually harvested by hand. It can only be harvested during three months in the year. During Covid, the seasonal workers could not enter Germany to harvest the white asparagus, but because it was so sought after, Germany passed an emergency Bill allowing them in.



# I hate to see a man sitting idle, neither working for his world nor for his Hereafter



We never know where our sustenance can come from. The island of Run in Indonesia was the scene of a European race to kick out the Arabs and get spices directly. In the 17th century it was an island of great economic importance because of the value of the spice it produced which could not be found anywhere else: nutmeg and mace. This island was the first place to be colonised by the British and was effectively the start of the British Empire. The Arab traders had discovered them in the 13th century but kept it a secret from European traders. They successfully traded the spice to the benefit of the producers. The Europeans wanted to gain maximum profit by exploiting the resources and the people. The Dutch took control of Run Island by means of a vicious military campaign in 1621 which saw 14,000 of the 15,000 inhabitants killed, starved, exiled, or sold into slavery. The British and Dutch then fought over this island and a little-known island on the other side of the world in the Americas called New Amsterdam. Eventually the British traded Run Island for New Amsterdam renaming it New York. Today Run Island is largely forgotten with nutmeg being cultivated in many other places but New York in 2022 generated 2,1 trillion dollars' worth of business and is the world's premier financial centre. We don't know where money will come from.

This is a glimpse into the amazing ways of making money and earning a living. The opportunities are there. One needs to apply his mind and try. A businessman needs to be bold and daring, willing to take some risk of failure and try different things to become successful in business. Ibn Khaldun writes, "Whoever is not willing to take a chance and put himself forward to seize opportunities should stay away from business and trade." For him, a salaried job is a better option.

Ibn Masud ؓ says, "I hate to see a man sitting idle, neither working for his world nor for his Hereafter."

## SOME TIPS TO SEE SUCCESS IN BUSINESS

1. Have an intention to be independent and to have well-being. Whoever intends independence and not having to ask from people will be granted that quality. (Bukhari)
2. Trust in Allah ﷻ. When a business decision seems confusing, resort to Istikhaara: Read two Rakaats of Salaah, and make Dua asking Allah ﷻ for guidance on which course to adopt. The Prophet sallallahu alaihi wa sallam would teach the Sahaba ؓ Istikhaara like he would teach them a Surah from the Noble Quran.
3. Be content with money that is sufficient and don't give in to greed. Ibn Mubarak ؒ said, "It is better for me to return one doubtful Dirham (silver coin) than spend 100,000 Dirhams in charity." Be happy with one's lot after making the necessary effort. "Allah ﷻ tests His slave in what He gives him. Allah ﷻ will place blessings in the wealth of whoever is content with what Allah ﷻ has set out for him and will expand it. Whoever is not pleased with his share will not have any blessings in it." (Ahmed)
4. Ensure that the business is Shariah compliant and that it is a Halaal commodity. "The traders will be resurrected on the Day of Judgement as sinners except those had fear of Allah ﷻ, did good deeds and were honest." (Tirmidhi)
5. Pay the Zakaat that is due on one's wealth.
6. Don't incur unnecessary risks by taking on huge loans which one will struggle to pay back. It will only mean constant worry, stress and sleepless nights.
7. Keep proper accounts of your business dealings.

The honest, trustworthy businessman will be in the company of the Prophets, the pious and the martyrs on the Day of Judgment. (Tirmidhi)  
Ultimately, one who is earning a living to spend on his children, his old parents, and to abstain from begging is in the path of Allah Ta'ala. (Tabrani)  
The person who comes home tired after a hard day's work,

earning for the correct reasons, will be forgiven. (Tabrani)

Don't be afraid to try in business, to take chances and to look for opportunities of earning, for with the correct intention and done in the correct way, trade and commerce becomes praiseworthy, a means of earning reward and a ticket to Paradise.



# HADITH

## VERIFICATION SERIES 13

In this series we bring you a selection of topics from [hadithanswers.com](http://hadithanswers.com)



### AN UNTRACEABLE VIRTUE OF BISMILLAH

**Question:** Is this authentic: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Whoever recites 'Bismillah' 21 times after 'Isha Salah will not be harmed by epidemics and will be protected against sudden death."

**Answer:** I have not come across this narration in any primary source. A similar narration has been cited in non-primary sources.

The narration should not be quoted until it can be sourced in a primary source and then verified.

And Allah ﷻ Knows best.

### A NARRATION ON RECITING QURAN DAILY FROM THE FORTY HADITHS ON ETIQUETTE

**Question:** Is this a Hadith?  
لا تدع قراءة القرآن على كل حال

**Translation:** Under any circumstance, never leave out the recitation of the Quran.

**Answer:** : These words appear in the Hadith known as 'Forty Hadiths on etiquette.' The narration is recorded in At Tadwin Fi Akhbari Qazwin and other sources on the authority of Sayyiduna Salman Al Farisi ﷺ.

(At Tadwin Fi Akhbari Qazwin, vol. 3 pg. 375. Also see: Kanzul 'Ummal, Hadith: 29467)

However, 'Allamah Dhahabi ﷺ and others have declared this Hadith a fabrication.

(Mizanul I'tidal, vol. 2 pg. 98, number: 2869, Lisanul Mizan, vol. 3 pg. 557, number: 3297. Also see: Tarikh Dimashq, vol. 43 pg. 145, Mizanul I'tidal, vol. 4 pg. 26, number: 6715)

There are many authentic Hadiths encouraging the recital of Quran. These should he quoted instead.

And Allah ﷻ Knows best.

### NABI ﷺ LOVED SURAH A'ALA

**Question:** What is the authenticity of the Hadith which states that Nabi ﷺ loved Surah A'ala?

**Answer:** : Imam Ahmad ﷺ has recorded this Hadith.

Sayyiduna 'Ali ﷺ said: "Rasulullah ﷺ used to love this Surah;

سبح اسم ربك الأعلى

(Musnad Ahmad, vol. 1 pg. 96, Hadith: 742)

The chain consists of a narrator who has been declared weak by some Muhaddithun and very weak according to others.

(Refer: Mizanul I'tidal, vol.1 pg. 347, number: 1345 and Majma'uz Zawaid, vol. 7 pg. 136, Hadith: 11532) Also see: Tafsir Ibn Kathir, beginning of Surah A'ala, vol. 7 pg. 540

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# The Napoleonic Code

In 18th century Europe a man by the name of Napoleon Bonaparte was launching a bid to build a French Empire. He came to prominence after the French Revolution.

In 1798 he led a military expedition to Egypt and captured cities in Palestine such as Gaza, Jaffa and Haifa. He was stopped by the Ottoman army at the Siege of Acre. His campaign comprised of human rights abuses as the time when he allowed his soldiers to kill 2,000 prisoners by bayonet or drowning. Men, women, and children were robbed and murdered for three days. This was the precursor for French colonial atrocities in Algeria, etc. The recent popular coups in Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso where French military and political interference is being removed is a result of this continued French imperial mind set.

There is an interesting chapter on Islam's impact and influence on Napoleon and the resultant influence on European law. Sheikh Saeed Kamali says that the French historian Gustave Lebon wrote that while in Egypt, Napoleon got hold of an Islamic book on which he

based the first uniform set of French laws. This was known as the Napoleonic Code or the French Civil Code of 1804 which is still largely intact. The book was called *Sharah Dirdeer ala Mukhtasar al Khalil*. This is an authoritative Maliki Fiqh book much like the *Minhaj* is for the Shafis.

Like other major Fiqh texts it covers all aspects of law including worship, personal law, trade, and commerce, etc. This adoption of the *Mukhtasar* by Napoleon was the start of secularism and liberalism because Napoleon left out the religious aspects and aspects dealing with morality such as laws on homosexuality and opened the door for man's laws as opposed to Divine laws.

**On studying the French Civil Code, one finds striking similarities with especially the Maliki school of thought.**

This is even though Napoleon did not acknowledge the Islamic source of his laws nor do many historians. Here are some examples in his original code of 1804:

1. If a man goes missing, the wife can apply to the court, and he will be presumed dead after a period of four years passes in the Maliki Fiqh. Article 115 of the French Civil Code also sets the term at four years.
2. A guardian can be dismissed on grounds of fraud or instability in Maliki Fiqh. Article 444 of the French Civil Code states the same.
3. Maliki Fiqh determines that a consumer loan of lending something that can only be benefitted from by using it such as food has to be replaced by a similar item. Article 1875 of the French Civil Code is the same.



## Herbert George Wells states that Europe is indebted to Muslims with regards to International Law



4. In the case of a wall dividing two properties collapsing and one neighbour wishing to rebuild it while the other refuses, the Court will compel the latter to pay towards the cost according to Maliki Fiqh. This is the same in Article 663 of the French Civil Code.
5. Maliki Fiqh rules that a person cannot build a window or door overlooking his neighbour's yard thereby causing inconvenience. Napoleon's code states the same.
6. In Islamic inheritance there are certain instances where a percentage of the estate is left over after all the prescribed heirs are allocated their shares. In the Hambali and Hanafi Fiqh this will be redistributed to the heirs according to their shares. In the Maliki school this amount goes to the Public Treasury. Article 767-8 of the French Civil Code

allocates it to the Republic of public treasury.

Why did Napoleon take a Maliki text when he would have come across Shafi or Hanafi texts in Egypt? Sheikh Saeed Kamali surmises that the first experience that Europe had with Islamic Fiqh would have been Maliki. France, bordering Muslim Spain would have been most familiar with this school of thought because Muslim Spain almost uniformly adopted the Maliki legal school by 400 AH. The Fiqh's text, as in all other Mathab's texts, covered all circumstances of life such as the penal code due to them being reference points for judges in Muslim countries.

In other ways as well, Islamic law has fashioned modern European law:

1. Giorgio de Santillana, a professor at MIT, said that the Islamic civil code had ramifications in the international trade and commerce laws as we know them.

2. Herbert George Wells states that Europe is indebted to Muslims with regards to International Law.
3. Gustave Lebon laments the fact that the French won the Battle of Poitiers under Charles Martel against the Muslim forces of Abdur Rahmaan al Ghafiqi. This stopped the Muslim march into France and he says that the Arabs could have guided the French to Latin sciences much earlier in history as in Spain. When European kings could not write their names, Muslims in the universities of Andalus (Muslim Spain) were reading and composing poetry.

The European school curricula deliberately ignore the Muslim contribution for progress by speaking about the Greeks and Romans, then fast forwarding to the French Revolution. 800 years of Muslim advancement is left out leaving the populace ignorant.





# Notes on Libya

The North African country of Libya has been in the news of late due to the catastrophic floods of September 2023. Over three thousand people are confirmed to have lost their lives while many thousands more are missing. The city of Derna was especially hard-hit with a quarter of the city being wiped out. The storm that caused the catastrophe is estimated to be the deadliest to hit Africa in recorded history.

## A Beautiful Country

The Danish Muslim convert to Islam, Knud Holmboe (who took the name Ali Ahmed el Gheseiri) journeyed across the Sahara from Morocco to Libya in 1930. He came from an affluent family and accepted Islam in 1925. He travelled widely and is well known for exposing the European colonial atrocities against the civilian populations especially in Muslim North Africa. He also witnessed the Italian mistreatment in Albania. In Libya he wrote extensively about the crimes of the Italian occupation forces against the Muslims and took photographic evidence. He was arrested by the Italians in Libya and thrown out of the country while on his trip from Morocco to Egypt.

He wrote a book called *Desert Encounter* condemning the colonial regimes in North Africa and especially the Italian terrorism and genocide against the Muslims in Libya. He started for Hajj in 1931 after writing the book but was murdered in Aqaba with many suspecting Italian intelligence having conspired in his death.





## The Red Castle

It is on the waterfront of Tripoli. The origins of the castle are from the Phoenicians in the 7th century BC

He made it as far as Derna in Libya on his trip and describes the city:

“As far as climate goes, Derna is Paradise on earth. It is situated by the shimmering blue Mediterranean and has the most marvellous temperature in all Africa. All Derna is a sea of flowers, and all the world’s most wonderful fruits grow here. Derna has the clearest, sweetest, and purest water in North Africa. It comes down from the mountains and flows over the ground in the town itself and its environs. The ground in Derna is covered with a thick carpet of grass where gaily coloured flowers grow. In the gardens the fan-shaped banana trees bear their yellow burdens the whole year round, and even if the bananas are not as big as the famous fruit from Jamaica their flavour is much better,

like a mixture of pineapple and strawberry. Apricots and peaches grow as big as goose-eggs and the blue and green grapes which twine on the frames across all the streets, and which in the autumn are bursting with the pressure of the juice, are large and heavy as pigeon’s eggs. And just as the town itself is bright and kindly, lying there under the perpetually blue sky, so are its people too. There are few places in North Africa where Islam is followed more scrupulously than here.”

Unfortunately, at that time the Italian occupiers were carrying out a genocide against the people of Libya and the last chapters of Holmboe’s book are one of the very few records of these crimes against humanity. It brought to light the violent grip of Mussolini’s

Italians in Libya. During his stay in Cyrenaica, the eastern region of the country, he wrote, “Thirty executions took place daily, which means that about twelve thousand Arabs were executed yearly, not counting those killed in the war.” Bedouins also saw their wells cemented useless by the Italian military and livestock mowed down by machine gun fire, which forced the desert-dwellers to choose either slow death or humiliation in dilapidated concentration camps. “The land swam in blood,” Holmboe wrote.

## Long, Rich History

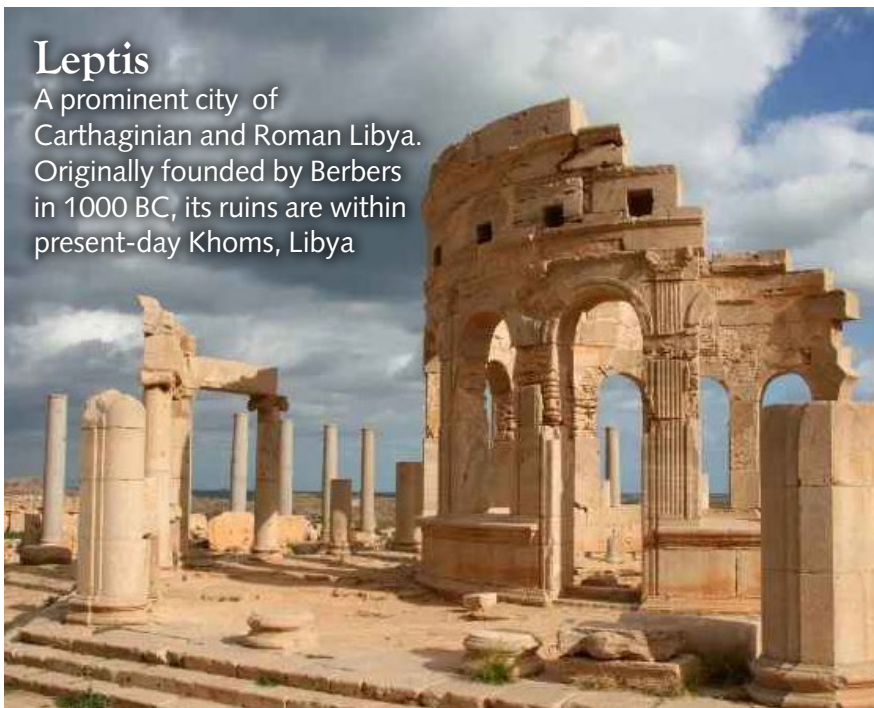
Libya has a long and rich history. It is the fourth largest country in Africa and the 16th-largest in the world. The overwhelming majority of the people are Muslim, and the country has stayed firm on Islam since the early days of Islam.

The Phoenicians were the first to establish trading posts in Libya. By the 5th century BC, the Phoenician colony Carthage had extended its rule across much of North Africa including Libya.

In 630 BC, the Greeks colonized the area around Barca in Eastern Libya and founded the city of Cyrene. Within 200 years, four more Greek cities were established in the area that became known as Cyrenaica.

## Leptis

A prominent city of Carthaginian and Roman Libya. Originally founded by Berbers in 1000 BC, its ruins are within present-day Khoms, Libya








## Sabratha

Sabratha in Libya, was the westernmost of the ancient three cities of Roman Tripolis. It lies on the Mediterranean coast

In 525 BC the Persian army of Cambyses II overran Cyrenaica, which for the next two centuries remained under Persian or Egyptian rule. Alexander the Great ended Persian rule in 331 BC. Eastern Libya again fell under the control of the Greeks.

Rome formally annexed the Libyan region of Tripolitania in 74 BC and joined it to Crete as a Roman province. As part of the Africa Nova province, Roman Tripolitania was prosperous, and reached a golden age in the 2nd and 3rd centuries. On the Eastern side, Cyrenaica's first Christian communities were established by the time of the emperor Claudius. Libya was also until recent times the home of one of the oldest Jewish communities in the world, dating back to at least 300 BC. A series of pogroms by the Italians 1945-1948 drastically reduced Libya's Jewish population.

Under the command of the Sahabi Amr ibn al Aas , the Muslim army conquered Cyrenaica. In 647 an army led by Abdullah ibn Saad took Tripoli from the Byzantine Romans. Fezzan was conquered by Uqba ibn Nafi in 663 and the Berber tribes accepted Islam. For the next several decades, Libya was under the rule of the

Umayyads until the Abbasids overthrew them in 750, and Libya came under Abbasid rule. Admiral Sinan Pasha took control of Libya for the Ottomans in 1551 from the Knights of St. John. Libya remained under Ottoman control until the Italo-Turkish War (1911–1912) when Italy occupied the country.

## Colonial Atrocities

The Libyan region of Tripolitania was the scene of the first war of imperialism waged by the USA outside the American continent. In 1801 US President Thomas Jefferson ordered a naval and military expedition to North Africa in what became known as the Barbary War. The Pasha of Tripoli declared war on the USA. In 1805 US forces stormed the harbour fortress of Derna. This event marks the birth of the US Navy and Marines and is commemorated in the Marine's battle hymn.

In 1911, Italy went to war with the Ottoman Empire and invaded Ottoman Tripolitania. One of the most notorious incidents during this conflict was the October Tripoli massacre in 1911 when the Italian military attacked the population of the Mechiya oasis, massacring

4,000 people including women and children over the course of three days. The civilians were murdered in the streets, in their houses, farms, gardens, and in a mosque, where several hundred women and children had taken refuge.

In 1912, 10,000 Turkish and Arab troops were imprisoned in concentration camps in Libya. All Turkish troops were executed.

Knud Holmboe described the concentration camps into which the Italians forced the Muslim population where torture and famine were rife. The so-called "pacification of Libya" by the Italians resulted in mass deaths of the people in Cyrenaica, killing approximately one quarter of the population of 225,000. In 1923, Italian leader Mussolini embarked upon a brutal campaign to break the Libyan liberation movement. Italian forces began to occupy large areas of Libya to allow Italian colonists to rapidly settle in it. Civilians were executed. Refugees from the fighting were subject to bombing and strafing by Italian



aircraft. In 1930, in northern Cyrenaica, 20,000 Bedouin were relocated, and their land was given to Italian settlers. The Bedouin were forced to march across the desert into concentration camps. Starvation and other poor conditions in the camps were rampant and the internees were used for forced labour, ultimately leading to the death of nearly 4,000 internees by the time they were closed in September 1933.

Ilan Pappé estimates that between 1928 and 1932 the Italian military killed half the Bedouin population directly or through disease and starvation in concentration camps in Libya. During that era, Italy's policy of unleashing unmitigated violence to destroy the Libyan resistance and subdue the local population would result in the death of more than 83,000 Libyans. Around 70,000 mostly civilians including women, children and the elderly, died of starvation and disease.

The German Nazis copied the extreme violence carried out by the Italians against Libyans and it became a model for what they would end up doing on European soil. Their field visits to Libya were followed by books, conferences, and seminars on the Italian colonial experience both in Libya and Abyssinia (Ethiopia), where the Italians carried out a similar campaign of extreme violence.

## Heroic Resistance

It was during this period that the Muslims of Libya put up some of the most heroic resistance to occupation. Omar al Mukhtar Muhammad bin Farhat al Manifi (b. 1858–d. 1931), called The Lion of the Desert, was an Imam and leader of Muslim resistance in Cyrenaica (Eastern Libya) under the Senussids, against Italian colonization. A teacher-turned-general, Omar was a prominent figure of the Senussi movement. Beginning in 1911, he organised and led the Libyan resistance movement against the Italian colonial empire during the First and Second Italo-Senussi Wars. Externally, he also

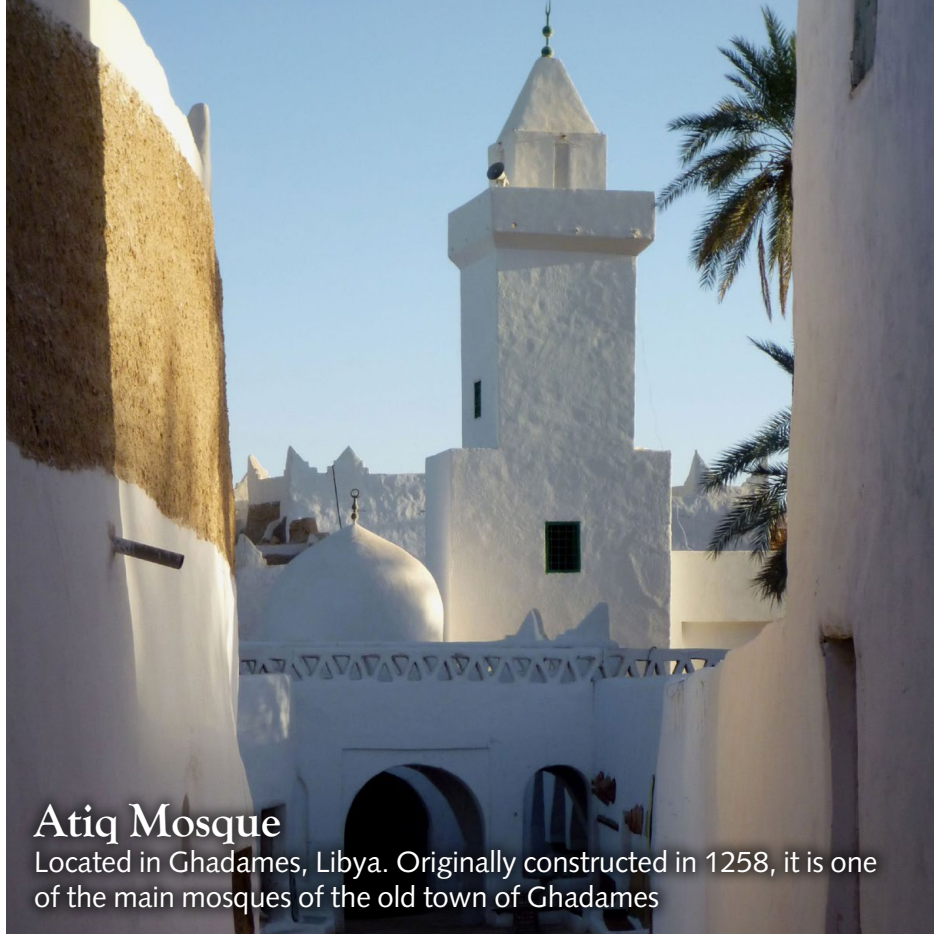
fought against the French colonization of Chad and the British occupation of Egypt. After many attempts, the Italians managed to capture him near Sionta when he was wounded in battle and hanged him in 1931 at the age of 73 after he refused to surrender.

Knud Holmboe wrote of the regal bearing with which the captured Muslim fighters faced execution. "Nothing in their faces showed terror of death." Omar al Mukhtar also faced his martyrdom with great nobility reciting the verse of the Noble Quran, "From Allah we come and to Allah we must return."

Another prominent resistance leader, Idris al-Mahdi as-Senussi (later King Idris I), Emir of Cyrenaica, continued to lead the Libyan resistance until the outbreak of the Second World War. Libya became

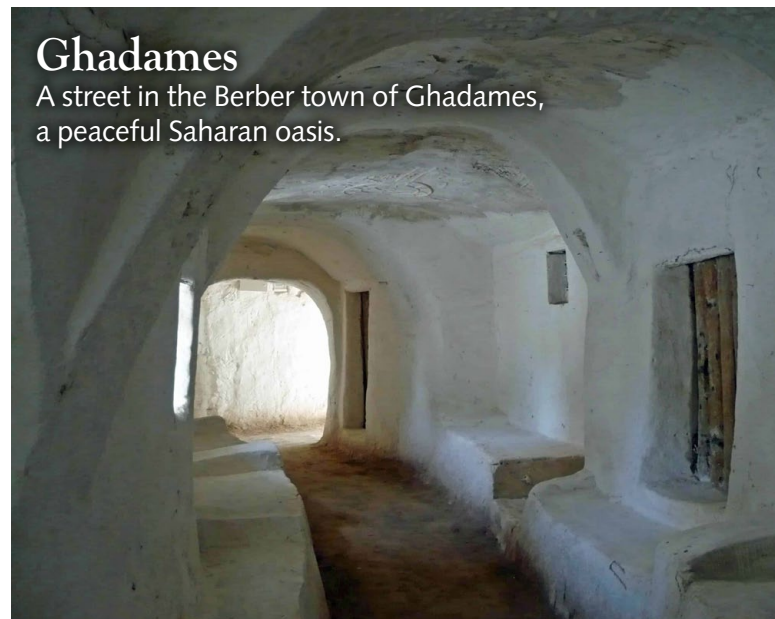
independent as a kingdom in 1951. A military coup in 1969 by Muammar Gaddafi overthrew King Idris I and created a republic. Civil wars followed Gaddafi's overthrow in 2011 with Libya currently split in two regions. The country has the 10th-largest proven oil reserves in the world.

Libya has been the scene of events of great significance. It has held firmly to Islam through all the tests and saw some of the greatest resistance to colonialism anywhere.



### Atiq Mosque

Located in Ghadames, Libya. Originally constructed in 1258, it is one of the main mosques of the old town of Ghadames



### Ghadames

A street in the Berber town of Ghadames, a peaceful Saharan oasis.

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